

ELE 02

Ministère de l'Education Nationale

CAPES EXTERNE D'ANGLAIS

CAFEP EXTERNE D'ANGLAIS

SESSION 2005

ÉPREUVE EN LANGUE ÉTRANGÈRE

Consigne

Dans le cadre de votre épreuve, vous procéderez :

- à la présentation, à l'étude et à la mise en relation des trois documents proposés
(en anglais)
- à l'explication des trois faits de langue soulignés dans le document
(en français)
- à la restitution du document sonore que le jury vous proposera
(en français)

Of all the great modern innovations, the railroad is probably the one to which American artists have accorded the most significance. The passenger railroad first appeared on the American scene in the 1830s, and it almost immediately caught the eye of several of the nations most gifted landscape painters. By the time of the Civil War the new machine had already been
5 incorporated in the work of Thomas Cole, Thomas Doughty, Asher Durand, and John Kensett. The subject attracted their attention because of its newness—its radically innovative character—and because of its compelling visual properties. A steam-powered locomotive moving across the landscape is an arresting sight—so arresting, indeed, that its visual character alone might seem to account for the strong hold it so quickly took on the imagination of artists. Here, after all, was
10 an imposing, mobile, man-made contrivance, a complicated mechanism wrought of dark metal in various shifting geometric forms; the engine's motive power was made visible by the train of cars it pulled, the surging puffs of smoke and steam (black or white or both) that trailed behind it, and the intermittent flashes of red when its fire box was open.

The “iron horse” is a fascinating object, it is true, yet even a brief survey of the American
15 paintings and photographs in which it appears reveals that what artists often have found most interesting is not so much the machine itself—its inherent visual attributes—but its presence in the countryside: the evocative juxtaposition of the mechanical artifact with the shapes, lines, colors, and textures of the natural setting, whether wild or rural. What captivated them was the coming together of the locomotive’s smooth, metallic efficiency, compact with purpose, and the
20 organic forms of the landscape; it was a set of contrasts between the dark smoking engine and the soft colors—blues, greens, browns, and whites—of the sky, fields, and woods; between the sharp-edged lines of the machine and the irregular (flowing, rounded, or jagged) lines of the clouds, mountains, rivers, trees, and flocks.

But the more we consider the evocative power of this complex image, the more
25 apparent it will be that from the time of its initial appearance in the American landscape the railroad's merely visual or perceptual attributes have been inseparably bound up with its underlying thematic, social, or ideological significance. Perhaps this is only to say that the idea of “merely visual or perceptual attributes,” however useful for purposes of analysis, is a fiction. As Rudolf Arnheim and E. H. Gombrich have so persuasively argued, seeing and thinking,
30 perception and cognition, are interactive aspects of a single process. In fact there is one significant group of mid-nineteenth-century American paintings in which the artists apparently set out, quite deliberately and with a manifestly “ideological” purpose, to ignore or render inconspicuous the appealing visual attributes of the railroad-in-the-landscape.

In any event, the significance of the railroad, like that of most technical innovations, was
35 present in the culture before the thing itself was. Long before the first passenger railroad lines began operations, indeed before the steam-powered locomotive was in evidence, the press had begun to inform the public about its unique physical properties and its capacity to effect change. It could pull more weight faster and further than people had thought possible, and it soon became obvious that this method of transportation was to have far-reaching economic and
40 social consequences. For some fifteen or twenty years after the first passenger railroads began operations, about 1830, while the press kept up the excitement with stories about every imaginable aspect of the new technology and practitioners of the popular arts contributed songs and pictures, poems and fictions to the hubbub, the public in England and the United States was

in the throes of what was called, even then, “railroad mania.” In those days the railroad was as
45 great a source of wonder and excitement as the computer is today.

Neither the railroad’s newness nor the “mania” it initially aroused, however, can account
for the remarkably enduring interest of serious artists in the subject. Indeed, many of the most
distinguished treatments of the subject were not accomplished until long after the initial
excitement had subsided. No doubt the novelty of the railroad was still a factor in attracting the
50 attention of mid-nineteenth-century landscape painters like Jasper Cropsey, George Inness,
Thomas Moran, and Albert Bierstadt ; in several instances, in fact, the work of painters and
photographers was commissioned by the railroad companies as part of their effort to promote
tourist travel by rail and, probably more important, to improve what now would be called their
“public relations” with the view, especially, to winning large grants of free land from the
55 Congress. But the aura of discovery, innovation, and modernity that originally surrounded the
new machine surely had dissipated long before the subject caught the attention of such
modernist photographers as Alfred Stieglitz Charles Sheeler, and Walker Evans. In the work of
twentieth-century painters like Arthur Dove, Georgia O’Keeffe, John Sloan, George Bellows,
Charles Burchfield, and Edward Hopper, the railroad has less to do with a sense of the future
60 than of the past—less with hope or foreboding than with nostalgia. And after World War II, when
the documentary impulse embodied in nineteenth-century theories of aesthetic realism had lost
most of its vigor, we find that the railroad still figures prominently in the work of modernists as
David Smith, Franz Kline, and John Baeder. All of which is to say that American artists have
invested the railroad with a range and depth of significance that transcends the excitement
65 surrounding its initial appearance, or its novelty as visual object, or its manifest importance as a
technological and economic innovation. In any event, the significance of the railroad, like that of
most technical innovations, was present in the culture before the thing itself was. Long before
the first passenger railroad lines began operations, indeed before the steam-powered
locomotive was in evidence, the press had begun to inform the public about its unique physical
70 properties and its capacity to effect change. It could pull more weight faster and further than
people had thought possible, and it soon became obvious that this method of transportation was
to have far-reaching economic and social consequences. For some fifteen or twenty years after
the first passenger railroads began operations, about 1830, while the press kept up the
excitement with stories about every imaginable aspect of the new technology and practitioners
75 of the popular arts contributed songs and pictures, poems and fictions to the hubbub, the public
in England and the United States was in the throes of what was called, even then, “railroad
mania.” In those days the railroad was as great a source of wonder and excitement as the
computer is today.

Neither the railroad’s newness nor the “mania” it initially aroused, however, can account
80 for the remarkably enduring interest of serious artists in the subject. Indeed, many of the most
distinguished treatments of the subject were not accomplished until long after the initial
excitement had subsided. No doubt the novelty of the railroad was still a factor in attracting the
attention of mid-nineteenth-century landscape painters like Jasper Cropsey, George Inness,
Thomas Moran, and Albert Bierstadt ; in several instances, in fact, the work of painters and
85 photographers was commissioned by the railroad companies as part of their effort to promote
tourist travel by rail and, probably more important, to improve what now would be called their

“public relations” with the view, especially, to winning large grants of free land from the Congress. But the aura of discovery, innovation, and modernity that originally surrounded the new machine surely had dissipated long before the subject caught the attention of such
90 modernist photographers as Alfred Stieglitz Charles Sheeler, and Walker Evans. In the work of
twentieth-century painters like Arthur Dove, Georgia O’Keeffe, John Sloan, George Bellows,
Charles Burchfield, and Edward Hopper, the railroad has less to do with a sense of the future
than of the past—less with hope or foreboding than with nostalgia. And after World War II, when
the documentary impulse embodied in nineteenth-century theories of aesthetic realism had lost
95 most of its vigor, we find that the railroad still figures prominently in the work of modernists as
David Smith, Franz Kline, and John Baeder. All of which is to say that American artists have
invested the railroad with a range and depth of significance that transcends the excitement
surrounding its initial appearance, or its novelty as visual object, or its manifest importance as a
technological and economic innovation.

Leo Marx. “The Railroad-in-the-Landscape: An Iconological Reading of a Theme in American Art.” *The Railroad in American Art: Representations of Technological Change*. Eds. Susan Danly and Leo Marx. Cambridge, Mass. : MIT Press, 1988.

Then [Rufus] stood at the subway steps, looking down. For a wonder, especially at this hour, there was no one on the steps, the steps were empty. He wondered if the man in the booth would change his five-dollar bill. He started down.

Then, as the man gave him change and he moved toward the turnstile, other people
5 came, rushing and loud, pushing past him as though they were swimmers and he nothing but an
upright pole in the water. Then something began to awaken in him, something new; it increased
his distance; it increased his pain. They were rushing - to the platform, to the tracks. Something
he had not thought of for many years, something he had never ceased to think of, came back to
him as he walked behind the crowd. The subway platform was a dangerous place - so he had
10 always thought; it sloped downward toward the waiting tracks; and when he had been a little boy
and stood on the platform beside his mother he had not dared let go her hand. He stood on the
platform now, alone with all these people, who were each of them alone, and waited in acquired
calmness, for the train.

But suppose something, somewhere, failed, and the yellow lights went out and no one
15 could see, any longer, the platform's edge? Suppose these beams fell down? He saw the train
in the tunnel, rushing under water, the motorman gone mad, gone blind, unable to decipher the
lights, and the tracks gleaming and snarling senselessly upward for ever, the train never
stopping and the people screaming at windows and doors and turning on each other with all the
accumulated fury of their blasphemed lives, everything gone out of them but murder, breaking
20 limb from limb and splashing in blood, with joy - for the first time, joy, joy, after such a long
sentence in chains, leaping out to astound the world, to astound the world again. Or, the train in
the tunnel, the water outside, the power falling, the walls coming in, and the water not rising like
a flood but breaking like a wave over the heads of these people, filling their crying mouths, filling

their eyes, their hair, tearing away their clothes and discovering the secrecy which only the
25 water, by now, could use. It could happen. It could happen; and he would have loved to see it
happen, even if he perished, too. The train came in, filling the great scar of the tracks. They all
got on, sitting in the lighted car which was far from empty, which would be choked with people
before they got very far uptown, and stood or sat in the isolation cell into which they transformed
every inch of space they held.

30 The train stopped at Fourteenth Street. He was sitting at the window and he watched a
few people get on. There was a coloured girl among them who looked a little like his sister, but
she looked at him and looked away and sat down as far from him as she could. The train rolled
on through the tunnel. The next stop was Thirty-fourth Street, his stop. People got on; he
watched the stop roll by. Forty-second Street. This time a crowd got on, some of them carrying
35 papers, and there were no seats left. A white man leaned on a strap near him. Rufus felt his
gorge rise.

At Fifty-ninth Street many came on board and many rushed across the platform to the
waiting local. Many white people and many black people, chained together in time and in space,
and by history, and all of them in a hurry. In a hurry to get away from each other, he thought, but
40 we ain't never going to make it. We been fucked for fair.

Then the doors slammed, a loud sound, and it made him jump. The train, as though
protesting its heavier burden, as though protesting the proximity of white buttock to black knee,
groaned, lurched, the wheels seemed to scrape the track, making a tearing sound. Then it
began to move uptown, where the masses would divide and the load become lighter. Lights
45 flared and teetered by, they passed other platforms where people waited for other trains. Then
they had the tunnel to themselves. The train rushed into the blackness with a phallic abandon,
into the blackness which opened to receive it, opened, opened, the whole world shook with their
coupling. Then, when it seemed that the roar and the movement would never cease, they came
into the bright lights of 125th Street. The train gasped and moaned to a halt. He had thought that
50 he would get off here, but he watched the people move toward the doors, watched the doors
open, watched them leave. It was mainly black people who left. He had thought that he would
get off here and go home; but he watched the girl who reminded him of his sister as she moved
sullenly past white people and stood for a moment on the platform before walking toward the
steps. Suddenly he knew that he was never going home any more.

James Baldwin. *Another Country*, 1962.

(London, Black Swan Edition pp91-91)



Fanny Frances Palmer

Across the Continent. "Westward the Course of Empire Takes Its Way."

Colored lithograph, 1868.